

Summary Minutes

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 18, 2012

Alexandria City Hall, Room 2000

Members:

Present: Kent Barnekov, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association
Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Stewart Dunn, Planning Commission
Linda Hafer, Old Town Business and Professional Association
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Melinda (Mindy) Lyle, Citizen, Park Planning District III
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen from west of Washington St. and Chair
James McCall, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Patricia (Pat) Miller, Commission on the Arts
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.
Townsend A. (Van) Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.

Excused: Dennis Auld, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Art Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat leaseholder
Trey Hanbury, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Peter Pennington, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)

City Staff: Jack Browand, Division Chief. Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Faye Dastghleib, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
Dirk Gertz, Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Faroll Hamer, Director, P&Z
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
James Spengler, Director, RPCA
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z

Guests: Brian Buzzell
Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee
Michael DeTomo, Public Art Committee

Kathleen Dorsey, Haley and Aldrich
Mel Garbow, Harborside
Mark Pirrello, Moffat & Nichol
Joanne Platt
David Schoenwolf, Haley & Aldrich
Robert Sloop, Moffatt & Nichol
Monika Szczepaniec, Alexandria City Public Schools/Facilities
Bob Youngentob, President of EYA.

Welcome and Introduction

The Commission was called to order at 7:35 a.m. and Commissioners, staff and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from August 14 and August 23, 2012 meetings

Moved by Delaney, seconded by Watters, to approve the summary minutes of the August 14, 2012 and August 23, 2012 minutes, with an understanding that several corrections would be made, changing "\$300 million" to "\$300,000" under Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead on page 6 of the August 14 minutes, and correcting a typographical error on page 7 and names of the Alexandria Police Department representatives who attended the August 23 meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Presentation by EYA on The Oronoco, 601 North Fairfax Street development proposal

Youngentob, President, EYA, provided a presentation on The Oronoco. He indicated the site is the former Sheet Metal Workers office building which will be converted to a condominium community that will offer single-level residences that appeal to empty-nesters and others. He said Davis Construction is doing the demolition and general construction work. He said, upon acquiring the site, EYA had discussed its redevelopment plans with P&Z Director Hamer and P&Z recognized that the building's redevelopment as condominiums would be a conforming use and as long as the new building remained within the existing building's footprint, height and floor area ratio, EYA could redevelop the property by right without needing to apply for a Special Use Permit (SUP). Youngentob said EYA planned to create 60 Oronoco units, although zoning permits a maximum of 108 units, and the building's architecture would be redesigned to transform its existing shipbuilding-inspired architecture, developed by the Sheet Metal Workers for their building, into a more traditional design. He said the new architecture would reflect the Waterfront's industrial heritage and be similar to the reddish brick, metal and glass design used when the Georgetown waterfront's incinerator building which was transformed into the Ritz Carlton. Youngentob said the building's demolition began September 17, is expected to be completed by January 2013, with construction to follow, and work on the final units is expected to be completed by January 2014. He said 16 of 60 units had already been sold.

Parking

Youngentob said the building's 375-space two-level parking garage that had supported the Sheet Metal Workers building would be redesigned into a single-level 150-space garage and a new street-level entry would be added.

Preserving Oronoco Bay Park as public space

Youngentob said that during EYA's discussions with City officials and local residents about their redevelopment plans, concerns had been raised about the possibility that Oronoco residents might use Oronoco Bay Park in ways that could create a de facto private park. Youngentob said that to address this concern language would be included in EYA's agreements with condominium owners that makes it clear that Oronoco Bay Park is owned by the City, is open to the general public for use, and that public events such as festivals, concerts, and other events may take place in Oronoco Bay Park throughout the year. Youngentob said the EYA agreement with owners would also indicate that EYA plans to cooperate with the City in its planning for a Waterfront Art Wall that would run, in part, along the east side of The Oronoco, a plan included in the City's Waterfront Small Area Plan.

Delaney asked if EYA would preserve the mature trees located along the building's east side and Youngentob said the trees would need to be removed for two reasons: so that wall bricks could be replaced during renovation and to accommodate the possibility that the City's Art Wall would include artwork. Youngentob said that because Art Wall planning might not be finalized by the time EYA finishes The Oronoco's renovation, landscaping modifications could be made over time to accommodate the Art Wall. Watters asked if The Oronoco's renovation would impact the Mount Vernon Trail and Youngentob said the path would be unaffected.

Discussion: Waterfront Naming Policy

Miller introduced DeToma, a member of the Public Art Committee, to review the process for naming Waterfront public spaces that has been drafted by the Art/History Waterfront Plan Implementation Committee (Art/History Committee) over the previous two months. She said the new process would not replace the City's existing process for reviewing proposals to name public spaces, but adds steps at the beginning of the process to let Waterfront-related naming proposals be considered by all the relevant stakeholders. She said the proposal received from Van Fleet to rename Waterfront Park for John Fitzgerald would be reviewed by the Art/History Committee after the Waterfront process for reviewing naming proposals has been finalized. Miller noted the naming process identifies the entities responsible for reviewing and recommending a proposal and the order for their review and action.

DeToma reviewed a detailed chart that the Art/History Committee has drafted delineating steps in the application, review process, decision-making and, when needed, appeals process. He said that the Art/History Committee has not yet developed the decision-making criteria to be used to review an application. At Thayer's suggestion, DeToma agreed that Step 3 in the proposed process should be changed from the Art/History Committee's validating the "appropriateness" of an application to its

“completeness”. DeToma said all naming proposals verified as complete would be forwarded to the Commission and that if the Commission did not approve an application an applicant could decide whether to appeal the decision or revise the proposal.

Lyle and other Commissioners said they thought the draft naming process steps might take longer than the six months projected by the Committee. Miller said the Committee hoped each step in the staff review process could be completed within at most two weeks and McCall said that, for example, City staff should be able to review an application from a historical perspective within two weeks. Williams said prompt staff review of naming applications would be facilitated by the City’s Waterfront inter-departmental staff work group that meets regularly. Van Fleet said he did not see a need to revise the City’s existing process for reviewing naming proposals. Bernstein said having a clear step-by-step process would make it easier to identify an application’s status. Macek asked why the draft naming process included a step to review installations related to a naming proposal and McCall, a member of the Art/History Committee, said the process had been designed to cover all potential contingencies.

Next Steps

Browand said staff would submit the Art/History Committee’s proposed naming process to other City commissions and committees for comment and return the revised proposal to the Waterfront Commission at its October meeting. He said if the Waterfront Commission approves the proposed naming process it will then be forwarded to Council for action if necessary. He added that staff is inquiring as to whether approval by Council is needed. He said it was hoped that the City’s naming process could be formalized by year’s end.

Macek suggested and Commissioners agreed that Van Fleet’s proposal to rename Waterfront Park for Fitzgerald should be used as a dry run to test how well and how quickly the proposed Waterfront naming process works. Macek requested that the Commission be provided for action at its October meeting a finalized naming process, the actual application and review criteria to be used, and stakeholder comments on Van Fleet’s Fitzgerald Park naming proposal. He thanked the Art/History Committee, and particularly DeToma, for their work developing the process.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Update on Windmill Hill Park bulkhead safety fence

Browand said RPCA had incorporated into the temporary safety fence’s proposed design suggestions received during the summer’s public comment period and had submitted a revised design to the Board of Architectural Review at its September 5. He said RPCA had proposed a nautical rope fence design that had been the first choice among those responding to the City’s opinion poll posted on the website but that the BAR had instead approved a split rail fence design, the second choice of those who voted on the designs, and an appeal of the BAR’s decision had been filed by the Old Town Civic Association, Harborside Condominium Association and others. Browand said if the appeal were certified as valid it would be forwarded to Council for

consideration. Browand reported that someone had removed the interim safety signage that RPCA had posted around the bulkhead, and that replacement signs would be posted as bulkhead safety remains a concern. Lyle asked who would be liable if a person were injured on the bulkhead after a City safety warning sign had been removed. Browand said sign removal is a punishable offense. He said Council was not expected to consider the proposed safety fence before November.

Update regarding Waterfront Walk Matrix

Browand reported that the majority of items identified during the Walk had been completed, work continued on the remaining items, and he invited Commissioners to submit any additional questions related to the matrix information. Macek thanked staff for having promptly completed work on those issues raised during the walk that could be resolved quickly and for continuing to address the remaining ones.

Bernstein asked about ongoing work to Founders Park walkways. Browand said a new paving surface would be needed since the current surface is subject to significant erosion and that the current surface area would be replaced. He said funding is not available to resurface all the park's trails with a semi-pervious surface at this time.

Watters asked about the status of installing new historical interpretative signs in Oronoco Bay Park. Browand said RPCA had advised the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) that the damaged signage had been removed and would continue to discuss with OHA the installation of new signage as funding becomes available. Macek asked that the designs developed by OHA for the Waterfront's historic signage be provided to the Commission on an informational basis.

City Dock and Marina Maintenance and Repair Assessment Study

Browand reported that RPCA is working with the Department of General Services on a Request for Proposals to conduct a full assessment of Marina maintenance and repair requirements. He said the study's results would be an important reference for RPCA as it develops its Capital Improvement Projects priorities and determines ongoing maintenance priorities. He said RPCA would provide information about the study to the Marina Committee as it becomes available.

Waterfront Plan Implementation

Williams reported that the public meeting on the Union Street Corridor Study was scheduled for September 19 and that staff had incorporated into the revised proposals Commissioners' feedback on proposed site specific and Corridor improvements that had been presented at the Commission's August meeting. Macek encouraged Commissioners to attend the public meeting as an additional opportunity to hear public thoughts on the study.

Williams said that, in addition to the study's revised recommendation being presented to the Commission at its September 27 meeting, they would be provided to the Park and Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission, and Transportation Commission before being submitted to City Council. She said it was expected that Council would

receive the study's recommendations in late October. Williams invited Commissioners to participate in the public meeting and to send additional thoughts on the presentation to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services.

Macek said a member of the public had requested that additional data collected for the study be made public and that a summary of the study's data had been posted to the City's website. Macek said he would send Commissioners a link to the data summary.

Williams reported that the Beachcombers Request for Proposals was on Council's September 27 agenda and she would send Macek the link to the staff's supporting memo submitted to Council when it had been posted to the Council's website.

Williams reported that two City job vacancy announcements had been posted for positions to support the newly established Office of Implementation that will support the Waterfront Plan's implementation activities, one for a civil engineer and one for a director of the office of project management. She noted that the Commission had previously endorsed City funding to create this new office.

Report from Police Department ***Motor Coach Enforcement***

This report, originally scheduled for the Commission's August 14, 2012 meeting and deferred in the absence of a Police Department representative, was again deferred due to the absence of an Alexandria Police Department (APD) representative. Macek said he had conveyed his disappointment to APD that this information had not yet been provided and requested that information be provided for the Commission's October meeting regarding how and whether traffic regulations affecting motor coaches are being enforced. Van Fleet and other Commissioners said they were concerned there is still no visible APD presence at the King/Union Street intersection to direct traffic and enforce traffic regulations for all modes of traffic, especially for bicyclists. Van Fleet said he thought Council might need to raise the issue before APD enforcement would be improved.

Bernstein said the increasing number of coaches along King Street that accompanies increased visitor traffic during the fall highlighted the need to find a way to improve information being provided to motor coach companies about City traffic regulations affecting motor coaches.

Williams provided Commissioners a new City flyer, "Motorcoach Do's and Don'ts" regarding motor coach parking, idling and passenger loading/unloading in the City. Williams said the public is encouraged to report motor coach violations of City rules to APD's non-emergency phone number, 703-838-4444. She said a T&ES official had not been available to discuss the policy that day but could discuss it with the Commission at its October meeting.

Bernstein said more than an information flyer asking the public to report violations to APD is needed. She said that the Commission should find a way to improve the

situation since motor coach traffic violations have a significant impact on quality of life. Van Fleet said the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association should be more proactive even though they are not responsible for enforcing the traffic regulations. Van Fleet said motor coaches should be barred from the Historic District and their passengers shuttled into the neighborhood. Macek said that rather than adding additional buses to shuttle people into the Waterfront area ways should be considered for how to better inform motor coach operators of existing regulations and how to improve enforcement of those regulations.

Commissioners said they were very concerned that APD had not provided the information on enforcement of motor coach traffic regulations that had been originally requested for their August meeting. Macek said he would arrange a meeting to discuss the problem with the APD's liaison to the Commission prior to the Commission's October meeting.

Smedberg commended ACVA for its efforts to educate motor coach operators about City traffic regulations. He said the City's ability to impose restrictions on motor coaches visiting the City is relatively limited but the City can use education and enforcement to address the issue. He said broader issues affecting the unit block of King Street also need to be considered. Hall encouraged people to ask motor coach drivers which City business they are visiting so that the City and ACVA could follow up with business owners regarding appropriate locations for parking and loading/unloading passengers.

Report from Commissioners

Marina Committee

Thayer, the Marina Committee chair, said the Committee had met the previous Thursday, that he, Gosnell, Hafer, Hall and Macek had attended, and he encouraged Commissioners to attend the Committee meetings planned for the Thursdays before the Commission's Tuesday meetings. He said the next Committee meeting is October 11.

Thayer reported that members had identified the following issues for the Committee to review in coming months: the Marina fee structure, Marina maintenance, planning for future marina facilities and how that would affect current Marina leaseholders if the City were to decide to relocate pleasure craft from the existing Marina, and actions that the Commission could take to hasten efforts to find new tenants for the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion. In addition, Browand presented an overview of the Marina Assessment Study.

Thayer said the Marina fee structure review would consider the need to create a category for historic vessels and review the fee structure for all vessel categories, including those categories not currently covered, such as pleasure boats wishing to visit the Marina more than four times a month or commercial vessels that don't fit within existing categories. He said the Committee would also consider whether the Marina has a proper balance between transient and slip holders pleasure boats.

Thayer said the Committee would consider ways that the Commission could encourage short-term and long-term actions that would help the City resolve the problem of the Food Court's standing vacant.

Thayer said the Committee's October meeting would focus on two issues, the Food Pavilion and Marina's fee schedule. Thayer said he had requested that General Services provide the Committee a copy of the current Food Pavilion lease. Browand said he and Williams were breaking down the existing lease into a format that would be easier for the Commission to follow.

Thayer said the Committee would also review the Marina maintenance schedule. Bernstein said she agreed with the idea of finding a way for the Commission to be proactive in helping to resolve the Food Pavilion problem. Macek encouraged Commissioners to attend the Committee's upcoming meetings and said Thayer's meeting overview represented what had been a thoughtful hour and a half discussion. He invited Commissioners to provide additional ideas on Committee priorities to Thayer.

Art/History Waterfront Plan Implementation Committee (Art/History Committee)

Miller reported on the Art/History Waterfront Plan Implementation Committee's activities in addition to development of the Waterfront Naming Process. She said the Art/History Committee meets the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Durant Center and that its main focus was on issues related to Oronoco Bay Park and public art related to The Oronoco site.

Old Town Area Parking Study (OTAPS)

Macek, the Commission's representative on OTAPS along with Pennington, said OTAPS had completed its consideration of parking issues in residential areas and for some commercial areas, including issues related to commercial parking near King Street. He said OTAPS had decided to recommend that meters be installed uniformly along commercial blocks adjacent to the King Street commercial district. He said the question of whether to install meters near the Montgomery Center had been discussed at length and OTAPS thought more consultation with neighboring businesses was needed before a decision could be made, including additional vetting by stakeholders beyond those near the King Street corridor who comprise the OTAPS membership.

Macek said one additional OTAPS meeting would be held, on October 16, and at that meeting a draft policy statement would be considered that reflects the OTAPS discussions during the past two months. He said he would provide Commission members with a draft of the OTAPS statement prior to the October 16 meeting and encouraged Commissioners to provide questions or comments on it to him or Pennington. He said OTAPS decisions are subject to review by entities such as the Traffic and Parking Board, the Transportation Commission and, as needed, Council.

Presentation on subterranean engineering and construction

Moritz introduced the marine engineering briefing from Moffat & Nichol and Haley & Aldrich representatives and said the presentation had been developed in response to

questions raised during Commission discussions regarding the engineering feasibility of various subterranean projects planned for the Waterfront, such as garages. Schoenwolf said Haley & Aldrich is a geotechnical engineering firm that specializes in creating underground spaces for structures throughout the world, including projects that range from a single below-ground level to spaces that extend 100-feet below ground.

Schoenwolf reviewed a typical sub-surface profile and discussed the materials, construction and other factors that are considered when planning materials and design for a specific subterranean construction. He said the features and challenges of each construction site differ and are addressed specifically. McCall asked if problems presented by Alexandria's waterfront present unique problems, and Schoenwolf said that Boston's Rowes Wharf project had presented more difficult soil conditions than those found in Alexandria and that Haley & Aldrich had successfully addressed them through measures that included design choices. He reviewed the materials and ways in which waterproof excavation support systems can be used to create a waterproof hole in the ground for an underground foundation or garage.

In response to questions raised at previous Commission meetings about whether effective flood proofing of an underground parking garage in a Waterfront building would be technically feasible, Pirrello, with Moffat and Nichol, reviewed some of the flood mitigation design options that could be used for an underground garage. He said relocating cars from a garage when flooding is imminent is always an option, but that integrated flood protection measures can also be built into a building's design. He said measures such as a flood gate could be activated when flood waters are approaching and designed in a variety of attractive ways. Pirrello showed a Boston example of a flood gate designed to be used as a bench when it is not activated.

Pirrello said three jurisdictional factors would affect the City's Waterfront construction: the bulkhead line (a de facto no-fill line), the pier head line (the line past which structures are barred) and the federal navigation channel extending up to DC that comes into the City at the Robinson Terminal North and Robinson Terminal South piers and within which structures cannot be installed.

Sloop reviewed the multi-year process by which the City could pursue the de-authorization of a section of the federal navigation channel if the City were to decide to do that in the future to facilitate work that might be needed to support elements of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. He said if the City were to work successfully with Congress to gain passage of de-authorizing legislation that would be needed, a bill would need to be introduced on the City's behalf and the City would then work with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Coast Guard, the US Navy, the National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration in a legislative process that can take as long as 3 years. He said de-authorizing a portion of the federal navigation channel could provide the City with enhanced flexibility to build, dredge or fill in parts of the channel, but navigation and safety concerns would still need to be effectively addressed by the City's plans. He said legislation to de-authorize a portion of the federal channel had recently been signed into law to facilitate DC's work on its southwest DC wharf project.

Canfield asked what techniques could be used to minimize the problems of sedimentation and ice floes that might develop if a City marina were to be located at Robinson Terminal South. Pirrello said different strategies, such as deflectors, can address challenges that might arise when floating docks installed out into a river collect ice and debris.

Announcements/Public Discussion

There were no comments from the public.

Macek announced Pennington had resigned from the Commission effective October 31, 2012 and that the Commission would elect a new Vice Chair at its October 16 meeting. He said the main responsibility of the Vice Chair is chairing the Commission in the Chair's absence.

Macek reviewed the schedule of upcoming Commission meetings.

Williams announced that the Jones Point ribbon-cutting would be on September 22. Macek said he would not be able to attend and encouraged other Commissioners to do so.

Adjournment

Delaney moved and Hafer seconded that the meeting adjourn and the motion passed without objection. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 AM.